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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 216 29 August 1949

SUBJECT: Possibility of Soviet Armed Aggression Against Tito

Although the Kremlin has openly announced its unmitigated hostility towards the Yugoslav Government, direct Soviet military intervention in Yugoslavia appears improbable for the remainder of 1949. The lack of adequate logistical buildup in the Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia precludes any extensive military operation against Tito in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the far-reaching consequences of open Soviet aggression against Yugoslavia will continue to act as a forceful deterrent to military action so long as the USSR is unprepared to risk a general war. It is estimated, therefore, that the current display of Kremlin belligerence towards Tito as the arch enemy of the Soviet Union, unprecedented though it is, will probably be limited to an intensification of Moscow's "war of nerves," designed to further isolate, harass, and intimidate the Tito Government.

The present Soviet offensive is the result of: (1) the increasing likelihood that Tito will receive Western economic aid, successfully counteracting the effects of the Soviet trade blockade, unless the Kremlin can discredit Yugoslavia as a sound political and economic risk; (2) the vulnerability of the Kremlin's Albanian outpost on the lower Adriatic, and the urgency of preventing a Yugoslav-sponsored coup in Albania; (3) Tito's effective counter propaganda in recent months against Muscovite imperialism, which has placed the Kremlin at a serious disadvantage, both politically and ideologically; (4) Tito's continued existence as an unpunished heretic, permanently threatening the Kremlin's consolidation of its Communist empire.

The following factors, however, militate against recourse to armed aggression by the USSR in 1949: (1) Soviet logistical buildup in adjacent areas, which would be required for a decisive blow against Yugoslavia, is believed inadequate, while future stock-piling and troop concentrations, difficult to conceal, would probably disclose Soviet intentions at some later date; (2) the Satellite armies are unprepared militarily, politically, and logistically to undertake offensive operations within the foreseeable future;

Note: This paper was prepared by CIA subsequent to consultation with specialists in the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force but has not been formally coordinated. A supplement will be issued if further coordination is found to be desirable.

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(3) the USSR cannot count on a rapid victory against Tito's well-trained 30-odd Divisions and the tenacious Yugoslav people, who would rally against the invader; (4) attack against Tito would demonstrate conclusively the sham of the much-touted Soviet "Peace Offensive" and would probably result in accelerated implementation of Western defense measures; (5) armed aggression against Tito might result in direct Western assistance to a beleaguered Yugoslav Government.

The Kremlin may estimate, moreover, that by intensifying its pressures against Tito, it can generate sufficient tension and confusion within Yugoslavia to make possible a Cominform-inspired revolution. The Kremlin may hope that concerted Cominform subversive and sabotage activities, in conjunction with Yugoslavia's economic difficulties, and exploitation of Tito's minority and separatist problems will induce Moscow sympathizers in the Yugoslav Communist Party to repudiate Tito, thus obviating any necessity for outside military intervention. While the Kremlin may resort, ultimately, to guerrilla raids from neighboring Satellites in order to perpetuate a state of alarm throughout Yugoslavia, large-scale guerrilla activities on the Greek pattern would be met by imposing countermeasures from the Yugoslav security forces and would provide additional opportunities for Western intervention.

Despite the implications of the recent Kremlin statement that "other, more effective measures" will be applied in order to obtain a modification of Tito's independent policies, the Yugoslav Government has retained its composure. The fact that no extraordinary security measures have been recently taken within the country indicates confidence in the internal stability of the regime and in the effectiveness of existing measures. Tito's offer to negotiate, on a basis of sovereign equality, issues which are outstanding between Moscow and Belgrade has strengthened his legal position and placed the responsibility for future developments squarely on the Kremlin. It is believed that Tito, by pursuing his present cautious but firm policy will successfully avoid provocative steps which could provide the Kremlin with a legitimate pretext for carrying out its threats, and that he will be able to withstand current Soviet efforts to overthrow him by a Cominform-inspired revolution.

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